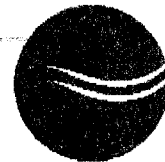


DATE 2/7/07

Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc., dba

Mid-Rivers
COMMUNICATIONS

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February 6, 2007

House Appropriations Committee
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400
SENT VIA E-MAIL AND FAX TO (406) 444-4825

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB368 & PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

On Wednesday, February 7, your Committee will hear a bill to fund the televising of Legislative proceedings (House Bill 368). For the first time, Montanans outside of Helena have a chance to watch their state's Legislative process in action right from their living rooms. This is an invaluable service, especially to those of us in far Eastern Montana that are nearly a day's travel time away from the Capitol. Mid-Rivers Communications urges you to please support HB368, and to incorporate the proposed amendments to list additional partners and clarify language on distribution of the appropriation.

The immense size of our state presents challenges in a variety of arenas, and television transmission across thousands of square miles is no exception. In the Mid-Rivers service area alone, we are faced with the challenge of bringing cable television services to nearly 20 communities spread out over approximately 30,000 square miles. In order to bring the TVMT programming to cable television subscribers in as many of our communities as possible, we have put in place well over 650 miles of circuits and several pieces of equipment at each location. After many weeks of working with VisionNet and TVMT to bring this programming to our system, the TVMT channel is now available in 16 Mid-Rivers Cable Television service area communities. Residents from Lewistown to Ekalaka and Miles City to Fairview can now watch live legislative proceedings from Helena. Many organizations in these communities, such as Chambers of Commerce and economic development groups, are very excited about the availability of this programming and are promoting it to their membership.

Approximately 12,000 households in Central and Eastern Montana are now receiving TVMT through Mid-Rivers Cable Television. In a region where legislative districts are as much as 17,400 square miles in size, and a trip to Helena involves over 500 miles one way, the ability to be immediately informed of Legislative activities important to local businesses and individuals is certainly worth \$250,000 in state funding. Please support HB368 and the proposed amendments to list additional partners and clarify language on the distribution of the appropriation. This programming is in the best interests of all Montanans, and those that have strived to bring it to the far corners and rural areas of the state should be offered support for their efforts.

Sincerely,

Erin M. Luttis
Business Development & Government Affairs Manager